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POLITIQUES COLONIALES ET LITTÉRATURES

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Balai Pustaka – A Colonial Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing

Although the colonial institution Volkslectuur, or Balai Pustaka, is well-known within the field of Indonesian studies, information is generally limited to skeletal data. This data is held together by the official date of foundation in 1908, the vaguely described reorganization around 1917, and, finally, the take-over by the Indonesians in 1945. Whenever the activities of the Volkslectuur are depicted, the phrases coalesce to the formula : « ... was founded in order to produce and distribute qualitative and low-priced reading-matter for the indigenous population when literacy noticeably increased as a result of the Ethical Policy ».

This paper is intended as a contribution to a field of inquiry that has not received due treatment thus far ⁽¹⁾. It aims at proving that the Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka was not a mere publishing house, but a multi-functional agency of socialization. It played an important role in conveying Western concepts of cognition, i.e. the designing and setting of values, models of behaviour, and new sets of social roles, all of which correspond to the decisive change in colonial society around the turn of the century. The more capitalistic structures characterized the political and economic situation, the more the interrelations between the various forces in society began to shift. The reaction of the colonized to the imposed fragmentary modernization ranged from active or passive acceptance and even cooperation to active or passive resistance. An indigenous public sphere developed and provoked counteraction from the colonizers.

In order to maintain colonial power, the Dutch introduced a suitably adap-

ted cultural and educational policy: the so-called Ethical Policy. The colonizers as « imperial subjects » had to acknowledge the specific quality of their « objects », at least to a certain extent. So the colonizers had to allow a certain degree of freedom and self-organization within the framework of the culture and societal structure they dominated. As the current political doctrine during the first decades of this century, the Ethical Policy was nonetheless a conglomerate of wide-ranging political convictions. However, all these convictions were combined with the belief that the Western understanding of modernization, of progress, and of civilization – regarded as universally valid – should be cultivated. At the same time the colonizers reinforced the original cultural network insofar as it corresponded to colonial interests of power.

Apart from military dominance, cultural dominance had to be sustained. Indissolubly linked with this, a minimum of acceptance from the colonized had to be obtained for the new, more subtle means and methods of oppression. The rapidly extended system of education stands for the transition from direct to indirect oppression, or, to quote Snouck Hurgronje: « Our inheritance (...) consists of the beautiful and rich tributary regions held by us by force. But if this claim is to withstand the stormy pressures of the times, we must now follow the material annexation by a spiritual one » (in Penders 1977 : 159 ; orig.). To this end the Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka came into existence, but not as an act of humanity, as some idealizing interpretations prefer to see it. Just as unlikely is that the colonial administration planned it to be a means of « spiritual annexation » right from the beginning, as other interpretations simplify. The context of its background is much more intricate, as will be shown.

1. Balai Pustaka : Initial plans ...

A Difficult Start

In a report from December 1905, J.E. Jasper, a low-ranking colonial civil servant, asked the government to take measures to improve the village school system, above all in rural areas of Java and Madura. He suggested a centralized organization of the production, distribution, and storage of appropriate reading-matter, preferably by the Department of Education and Religious Affairs (*Department van Onderwijs en Eeredienst*, hereafter O & E). According to Jasper, pupils and teachers needed wider opportunities to practise and improve their reading abilities. In addition, Jasper demanded an increased supply of reading matter in Latin script, with the purpose of encouraging the Javanese to turn their backs on their own traditional script (Op.Vb 390).

Almost three years passed before the officials in charge finally reached a decision. On September 14, 1908, a commission was constituted by governmental decree and put in charge of collecting the material demanded. The protracted founding of the commission suggests a half-hearted attitude on the part of the departments concerned. It was not until September 1907 that the O & E was officially contacted and instructed to search for persons with access to native languages and with sufficient knowledge of the everyday life of the indigenous people. With the help of such experts, textbooks which dealt

with common people's concerns would be produced.

Next, O & E called on G.A.J. Hazeu, the Adviser for Native Affairs, for support. After only a short while, Hazeu informed the O & E that a number of persons had declared their willingness to collect and, if necessary, to translate appropriate texts – in an honorary capacity. He then listed the names of members of the freshly constituted Commission of Popular Literature, the so-called *Commissie voor de Inlandsche school- en volkslectuur* (Op.Vb 600; Resultaten 1925 : 23) :

- G.A.J. Hazeu, chairman (Adviser for Native Affairs, Batavia),
- G.J.F. Biegman (Inspector of Native Education, Bandung),
- D. van Hinloopen Labberton (Lecturer for Javanese, Batavia),
- Ph.S. van Ronkel (Lecturer for Malay, Batavia),
- H.C.H. Bie (Deputy Inspector of Native Agriculture, Buitenzorg).

The participation of Indonesians was realized only on the lowest level of the hierarchy; the Bureau of the Adviser for Native Affairs provided a typist.

Still, Jasper's request was not fulfilled. Selection, production, and distribution of texts were not in a single hand. The *Commissie voor de Volkslectuur* functioned as an advisory panel, assisting the O & E in matters of text selection. Printing was usually carried out by the governmental printing plant or by private firms. Book sales – more often actually their storage – were delegated to the *Depot van Leermiddelen*, the stock room for school material.

In its initial phase, the Commissie devoted particular attention to traditional Javanese texts. Those chosen had to undergo complete revision. The texts were transliterated, condensed, or otherwise altered in language, in form, and in content. They finally ended as adaptations to Western standards. With the appearance of D.A. Rinkes in 1910, the Commissie's field of activities gained totally different contours – the same may be noted with respect to the pace of work, which, until then, had been rather leisurely. Rinkes, the really innovative and decisive personality behind Volkslectuur, led it out of its ivory tower. As a consultant in indigenous languages, Rinkes was attached to Hazeu's Bureau for Native Affairs and at the same time appointed Secretary of the Commissie. When Hazeu took his home-leave in 1913, Rinkes was promoted to Adviser for Native Affairs and succeeded Hazeu as head of the Commissie. Even the departments with a predominantly indifferent attitude towards the Commissie noted Rinkes' enthusiasm and commitment when he took over the new tasks.

The Volkslectuur Unexpectedly Gains Administrative Autonomy

In 1917, the *Bureau voor de Volkslectuur* (Rinkes preferred this designation for his office) was officially separated from the Commissie and was raised from being a sub-unit of the Adviser's office to the « peerage » of a formally independent colonial institution. The official depiction of this historical step reads as follows :

« The urgent demand for reorganization has gradually grown in order to intensify the work of the Volkslectuur and to allow a more systematic line of action, so that a well-organized and sufficiently equipped office has to be established and the Office for Popular Literature separated from the Office of the Adviser for Native Affairs.»
(*Mededeelingen* 1926 : 43) (2)

But this development did not result from a deliberate act of colonial policy; instead an « administrative accident », a mishap in personnel coordination, led to the foundation of the *Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka*.

In 1917, three circumstances coincided. First, in the eyes of his superiors, Rinkes appeared more and more suspect due to his openly demonstrated concern for the affairs of Sarekat Islam. Rumour even had it that Rinkes had converted to Islam and had become a secret member of Sarekat Islam. Second, when Hazeu left for Europe in 1913, nobody seriously expected him ever to come back to the Netherlands-Indies. But in 1916, the former Adviser surprisingly announced his return – and put the personnel department in an awkward situation indeed, for Hazeu's former post was now held by the politically out-of-favour Adviser Rinkes. Demotion or even dismissal was out of the question according to colonial custom. The only way out of the dilemma was to create a second position equal in status and salary. Third, in this precarious situation, it suited the decision-makers well that, at that time, Rinkes was in Jeddah on duty. So actions could be taken without running the risk of provoking his direct and spontaneous protest. It was deemed a practical solution to have Rinkes « promoted » to director of a *Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur en aanverwante aangelegenheden* ⁽³⁾ – and thereby push him on the « side-track » of literature, far away from any political relevance.

So a telegram dated from 12 April 1917 was sent by the General Governor to the Minister of Colonies :

« Rinkes would be most usefully employed after leaving Djedda on study British islam policy in *Egypt* and *India*. I suppose Snouck will assent this very important, stop. If this impossible he can be charged here volkslectuur and press relation and find time scientific work, stop. Hazeu becoming political Adviser including technical mohammedan affairs but most important work will so fall to Hazeu - it seems necessary (... illegible, DJ) prewarn Rinkes what his position will be, stop. Also in case he agrees all will go more smoothly if his return delayed some months .» (Op.Vb 1673 ; orig.).

This subtle degradation hit Rinkes hard. Two factors moved him to finally take the blow as a challenge : first, his complex personality composed of a strong will, a sense of commitment, and a certain stubbornness; and second, his peculiar path of entrance into colonial service via side-roads ⁽⁴⁾. Rinkes' personal ambition led him to determine to develop the Volkslectuur into a significant instrument of colonial policy, and thus to restore his damaged standing. In this way, he also hoped to regain the hitherto withheld acknowledgment and respect of his colleagues and superiors. In this context, Rinkes' view of literature and culture as a potential means of influencing politics is evident. This view was contrary to the conventional notion of literature.

Reaching the Readers : The Creation of a Distributive Apparatus

From the very beginning Rinkes' intentions were clear: he planned to reach not only the small elite of western educated Indonesians, but also to make use of the latter to gain access to other levels of the Indonesian society. He installed Sundanese, Javanese, and Madurese editorial offices, followed by a Malay section. Apart from their editorial tasks, the indigenous editors –

all working under the guidance of a Dutch official, a so-called *taal-ambtenaar*, for each section – were supposed to recruit educated Indonesians as employees of the Volkslectuur. At the same time, the indigenous high nobility was addressed and asked for its cooperation. Two members of the nobility then formally joined the Commissie.

In the initial phase of his activity, Rinkes directed his efforts to building a public library system of a kind and to an extent unknown in the colony until then. The so-called « Taman Poestaka » libraries were associated with the village and the second-class-schools and supplied by Volkslectuur. From 1916 on, the *Hollandsch Inlandsche Scholen* were provided with Dutch language publications selected or produced by the Volkslectuur. The major emphasis remained, however, on texts in Malay, Javanese and Sundanese. In fact, this location at a school solved the personnel problem, because the headmaster was responsible for the organization of the library. In addition, better control over the reading habits of the users was possible with this arrangement.

The enormous bureaucracy linked with the new library system (piles of regulation forms, record lists, and balance-sheets) was out of proportion to the actual function of the libraries. As a matter of fact, a « Taman Poestaka » was not much more than a cupboard of 3x3 metres situated in the classroom, containing books which could be borrowed during fixed lending-hours for a small fee. Although not exclusively intended for school children, the libraries were rarely frequented by other groups, with the exception of teachers, who often borrowed books themselves to use as teaching material in their classes. Nevertheless, the books found reception among educated and non-educated adults as well, although the lending figures did not illustrate this fact. One borrowed book would find an audience of ten to fifteen, because it was lent or read aloud to relatives, neighbours, and friends. Especially in rural areas, whoever was literate was expected to read journals and books aloud to the village public. The Dutch had taken this fact into careful consideration.

However, the individual perusal of literature remained the ideal form of reception in the eyes of the Volkslectuur. The act of reading itself and its unsociable component – « lonesome reading » – could effectively be functionalized. This aspect is well illustrated by an article titled « Taman Poestaka oentoeke pegawai onderneming », published by the Volkslectuur journal *Pandji Poestaka* in 1923. This article reports the (real or fictitious) efforts of some colonial officials who wrote to business firms and suggested the institution of company libraries with the following argument : « In addition to the increase in professional knowledge, this would have the advantage that the employees will no longer be inclined to participate in events outside (the company, DJ) or to get involved in 'crooked' affairs » (17.5.1923 : 9).⁽⁵⁾

The Volkslectuur continuously increased the range of its library arm. Libraries were instituted in barracks and hospitals, in prisons, and even in the prison camp of Boven Digoel. Not surprisingly, they found only little acceptance there. Following separation from the Commissie, the *Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur* – now « as a courtesy to the native reading public » with the additional name *Balai Pustaka* (B.P. : 6 ; orig.) – had focused its activities primarily on the expansion of its distributive apparatus. Rinkes had been given a free hand, sufficient equipment, and financial support (presumably to avoid further vexation). The Commissie maintained a formal existence, but it nei-

ther held regular meetings, nor was it asked for advice. Nor did the Colonial Ministry in The Hague pay much attention to Rinkes' doings : its watchful care was fully distracted by World War I. In more peaceful times it would probably not have appreciated the kind of « cultural pastime » the Volkslectuur was engaged in.

In 1919, the Volkslectuur moved into a new building, which had previously housed the governmental printing plant. The former composing room was converted into one huge office where all the editorial sections had their desks. Only the financial section and the director moved into offices of their own. More or less unobserved and without interference, the Volkslectuur followed its own policy until 1920. It was then that the long hedged fears of the O & E were confirmed : a check of the Volkslectuur's account-books revealed that the finances were in a disastrous state (Op. Mr 174).

Apparently, Rinkes had seized the opportunity to fleece the national budget for the sake of the Volkslectuur. Already, in 1917, he had submitted a list of demands. Among other things, he claimed that in addition to the increase in the technical capacities, personnel had to be increased, and distribution could no longer be left to the *Depot van Leermiddelen*. The last demand was marked as urgent. Rinkes had noticed with anxiety that texts entered the depot never to reappear again. Such happened to one title, printed in 1875 with an edition of 10.000 copies ; in 1912 there were still 9.980 copies kept in the store-rooms of the depot (Encyclopaedie 1921 : 611). Rinkes was determined to spare Volkslectuur products a similar destiny. According to his diagnosis, the stagnant sale of texts produced was due to a permanent lack of advertisement. Consequently he decided to take all necessary measures :

« which would be taken by any private trader, e.g to advertise in (native) daily newspapers, to circulate review-copies of the latest publications, in most of the cases already supplemented with a (it goes without saying positive) review for the editor's convenience. Furthermore, it would be accompanied by distribution of prospectuses, (...) the exposition of the products on night-markets, annual fairs, etc., and the publication of a descriptive catalog, which would be available annually free of charge. » (idem) ⁽⁶⁾.

Every opportunity was exploited to make the public eye take notice of the Volkslectuur. Right after assuming office, Rinkes had started to organize a network of « agents » to stimulate stationary book sales – in 1925 there were some 58 of these intermediary salesmen – and to hinder non-commissioned book traders from buying up Volkslectuur-publications to resell them later overpriced. Thus, all Volkslectuur-products had their prices clearly printed on the cover. As the « agents » received 25% commission on their sales as incentive, the price always had to be divisible by four. The ambiguity of the term « agent » is perhaps an allusion to a genuine double function of these sales agents: in an instruction paper with 14 points for agents stood e.g. : « Be sure to send us news as soon as possible about events that are of importance in native circles » (*Pandji Poestaka* 8.2.1923 : 9) ⁽⁷⁾. In addition, it was requested that reports be accompanied by photographic documentation.

In 1925, Rinkes introduced another effective means of distribution: Indonesian members of the Volkslectuur staff were sent out to travel the land

with a special vehicle to propagate Volkslectuur products (Geh. Vb 313). These sales vans and mobile libraries sometimes travelled the islands for several weeks. Reports were regularly sent to Batavia, from where, if necessary, text supplies were delivered by mail. Usually the vehicle was placed near a market – in expectation not only of a large audience, but of an audience with money on hand, as Drewes explained in an interview ⁽⁸⁾. Sometimes the travelling book-shop was posted just in front of the house of the village-head, who then was kindly requested to set an example by buying, reading, or subscribing to Volkslectuur products. Of greater importance than the presumably only minimally increased sales statistics was the publicity effect of these vehicles, considering that the bicycle had only just recently been introduced. In addition to this publicity, the sales cars gained insight into people's (literary) taste and generally into societal tendencies and public opinion. Understandably, only exceptionally trusted staff, well acquainted with the cultural network of the region, were chosen for this job.

Statistics proved the Volkslectuur's publishing policy justified and altogether a considerable success, considering the illiteracy rate at that time. Great resonance in the general public was achieved by the *Volksalmanak*, beginning in 1919 in Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese. It reached a circulation of 100.000. The same amount of books had been sold in 1920 and about one million borrowings had been registered – five times more than in 1914. Due to improved technical equipment, the book production had increased to at least 5.000 copies per edition (Op. Mr 174). The privileged position of the Volkslectuur allowed stable low prices and a high standard of quality. By using traditional forms of literary reception, as well as by introducing « modern » forms, such as subscription and catalog ordering, the Volkslectuur had grown to be a severe threat to all indigenous publishers. Its perfected system of distribution, particularly within the library and press systems, had made the Volkslectuur a decisive factor in the literary and journalistic market.

So, in the end the administration – still hesitating and with a fearful eye on the finances – decided to tolerate Rinkes' policy. However, in Rinkes' eyes, the evident success of the Volkslectuur was overshadowed by personal disappointment about the lack of esteem and the support withheld by the other departments. The fact that he did not succeed in realizing all of his plans finally led to embitterment. Rinkes' notion of culture and literature was ahead of its time and, thus, hardly met with any response. Conventionally, literature was not considered harmful or advantageous in a societal or political context. The only expectation connected with literature (if any at all) was that it not cause any extra expenses, at best. So Rinkes' proposal to have an additional number of editorial sections founded to provide texts for the « restless » regions (such as Atjeh or Bali) did not meet with approval.

Apart from the unsatisfying situation at work, Rinkes' political activities outside the Volkslectuur led to further frustration. The Midden-Partij, founded by Rinkes, A. de Geus, and W.A. Pennard on May 23, 1923, did not obtain any noteworthy response, apart from some mocking articles in the press. But the party's platform demonstrated that Rinkes was to be taken seriously within colonial politics. In coalition with the indigenous elite, the Midden-Partij strove to achieve independence from the Netherlands (Beginselverklaring 1923). In

the summer of 1926, Rinkes finally decided to retire. In March 1927 he officially left the colonial service, but not without being vexed for one last time by the colonial administration. The officials in charge took so much time to appoint his successor that, in the end, no time was left for Rinkes to acquaint the new head of the Volkslectuur with his work, as he had offered (and probably wished) to do.

T.J. Lekkerkerker and G.W.J. Drewes: the Heirs

T.J. Lekkerkerker was appointed new director of the Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur. He was an expert in agricultural engineering and until his appointment had been attached to the Department of Agricultural Trade and Handicrafts. At first sight, this choice did not seem to correspond with Rinkes' hopes for the further development of the Volkslectuur. Lekkerkerker had never been conspicuously active in the cultural field, nor had he ever earned any degree in Oriental studies. Shortly after assuming office, it became evident that Lekkerkerker had not only adopted Rinkes' ideas and argumentation, but that he also could put them into practice, at least partially. The Kantoor was soon subdivided into a linguistic and an administrative section; a separate administration office for the library service was installed. The personnel situation was improved with respect to quality as well as quantity in all four subdivisions. Finally, the further expansion of the distributive apparatus and the intensification of publicity campaigns found general approval (though not in every detail).

Between 1927 and 1930 a number of academics took up work at the Volkslectuur : C. Hooykaas, P. Voorhoeve, K.A.H. Hidding and – the only woman – M.C.H. Amshoff. This unexpected act of grace from the side of the administration was less in response to Lekkerkerker's impressively outspoken way of handling negotiations than the result of the steadily growing political tensions. The nationalist movement had been gaining influence and now presented itself as a serious threat to the colonial power. Social upheavals and the Communist revolt in 1926/27 shook the colonial apparatus severely.

Lekkerkerker knew how to take advantage of the critical situation : « In the present times of unrest and thirst for knowledge and skill the significance of the task of the Volkslectuur certainly has not decreased ». Elsewhere he declared, that « communism and communistic propaganda have to be fought actively and the Volkslectuur has the purpose of serving this aim in an *indirect* way » (Op. Mr 276 ; 299, stress orig.)⁽⁹⁾.

Lekkerkerker energetically underlined the merits of a distributive apparatus such as the one created by Rinkes and stressed that « with the establishment of the Volkslectuur we have created an institution which is capable of exerting a great influence upon the way of thinking of the natives, all the more so since every year thousands more learn to read » (Op. Mr 299)⁽¹⁰⁾. In order to reach as many levels of the indigenous society as possible, and in order to spread « good reading matter from which a positive political influence may also be expected » (idem)⁽¹¹⁾, Lekkerkerker took up Rinkes' argumentation, which had been applied only two years before, and insisted on broader support for the Volkslectuur. Still under the pretence of neutrality in political and religious affairs, and still officially dedicated to welfare

and general scientific objectivity, the Volkslectuur delivered what was considered « healthy spiritual food » (B.P. : 5 ; orig.).

A letter by Lekkerkerker dealing with a publicity-brochure reveals a view behind the scenes : « In my opinion, it would be undesirable for a brochure aimed at the public to stress the fact that the Volkslectuur considers this country to be an *object* of civilization, though such a view may be held with the most honest of intentions. However, one may be sure that the intelligent and gallant Frenchman as well as the unemotional and practical Englishman will detect this unspoken purpose » (Op. Vb 3119, stress orig.)⁽¹²⁾.

On December 23th 1929, Lekkerkerker unexpectedly passed away, and Drewes was temporarily commissioned to lead the Volkslectuur. The not yet thirty-year-old official thus approached the height of an astonishing, yet unintended career. Unlike Rinkes, Drewes belongs to that generation of colonial officials who passed through a complete academic career, including a doctorate in Oriental studies, without ever having seen the colonies. But immediately after finishing his studies, Drewes left Leiden for Batavia. There he actually planned to study the Indonesian national movement. On his arrival in 1926, Drewes was assigned to assist the Adviser for Native Affairs. Shortly afterwards, he was « lent out » to the Volkslectuur. Rinkes had appealed directly to the Council of the Netherlands-Indies, disregarding the colonial hierarchy, after the O & E had kept ignoring his plea for more personnel. Rinkes lamented the fact that the Adviser had just obtained three more employees, whereas the Volkslectuur had gotten none. Rinkes' complaint led to the above mentioned supplementary assignment. After two years as a language consultant, Drewes was promoted to head of the newly established linguistic section. (And still he was officially attached to and paid by the Bureau of the Adviser.) In 1930, he became temporary, and one year later permanent, Director of the Volkslectuur.

In an interview, Drewes pointed out that he - unlike Rinkes - had never been bound up with the Volkslectuur by personal or political ambitions. The only matter of importance to him was the smooth functioning of the Volkslectuur as a governmental service. As such, it would in fact always cost money instead of bringing a profit, but at least it became more economical under his direction. He proudly stated that under Rinkes the income and the expenses of the Volkslectuur were in a steady ratio of one to seven, whereas during his term of office the ratio was minimized to one to three. Despite the occurrence of cut-backs (and several acts of restructuring), Drewes basically stuck to the well-established policy of Rinkes. In the course of the world-wide economic crisis, some officials pondered aloud over the advantages of privatization in the case of the Volkslectuur. Drewes cunningly applied Rinkes' arguments in order to prevent the Volkslectuur from being taken over by the private publisher Kolff & Co, as was already being rumoured. Finally, the Council of the Netherlands-Indies gave in, but suggested thinning out the upper level of the Volkslectuur's management. The Council proposed to hand the Volkslectuur completely over to Drewes and J.F. Vos, who together were considered to represent a fortunate combination of cultural expertise and economic shrewdness.

Final Years under Colonial Rule

After Drewes had been holding the position of head of the Volkslectuur for five years more or less involuntarily, he was finally appointed as professor at the faculty of law in 1935. He was succeeded by J.F. Vos, who was suffering from a severe illness and therefore retired shortly afterwards. K.A.H. Hidding followed him. He considered – as Rinke had 25 years before – that a sound knowledge of the « mental and social structure of the native society and its different tendencies » was the absolute prerequisite for the maintenance of colonial power : « and this requires not only a profound knowledge of the traditional culture, which to date has been weakening in various ways, but also of modern trends, ways of thinking and attitudes, which influence traditional culture from many sides » (Encyclopaedie 1939 : 1944) (13).

In the meantime the second generation of academically educated orientlists had begun work: A.A. Fokker, J. Kats, and E.M. Uhlenbeck. Despite the world-wide crisis, Hidding could present unmistakable statistics of success, even in 1939 : booklending figures had risen to an average of two million per year. The various almanacs had shown the stable number of about 100.000 copies sold every year, with a rising tendency. The variety of journals was broadened and now included even a magazine for children. Publicity actions were supplemented by more detailed catalogs, innumerable leaflets, and a literary journal with the title « Boekennieuws », which appeared three times a year.

With the Japanese Occupation, the management of the Volkslectuur passed into the hands of the Indonesians who had been employed and trained by the Volkslectuur for many years. Sutan Pamoentjak, previous head of the Malay editorial section under Fokker, was appointed director of the Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka or, as it was now named: Gunseikanbu/Kokumni Tosyokyoku (14). In October 1942, Pamoentjak submitted an elaborate report on the history, organization, and activities of the Volkslectuur (15) and simultaneously requested permission to carry on with the Volkslectuur, it goes without saying, in Japanese service. Again, this argument recalls Rinke (and his successors) : Balai Pustaka is depicted as a broad bond linking the ruling power to its subjects. The statistics on selling and lending are carefully added. Referring to the enormous reach of the distributive apparatus, Pamoentjak points out that all « Schund » produced by Chinese publishers would soon be wiped out (or at least brought under control). Instead, entertaining and enlightening reading matter would be distributed among the population. Pamoentjak's report not only displays an attempt at ingratiation with the new ruling power, but also represents a further step to a one-sided (and, to date, not revised) image of literature, which is to serve the interests of power.

2. ... and what it turned out to be

The Political Dimension of Balai Pustaka's Activities

Only reluctantly did the colonial administration realize that the Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka represented a bond of great importance between colonizer and colonized, and not merely because of its accumulation of tremendous

expert knowledge (not least the command of various indigenous languages), of which the usefulness could no longer be denied. In the beginning, the colonial administration had seen in the Volkslectuur a mere object of representation and a manifest alibi for the Ethical Policy. Consequently, its service had seldom been requested and if it was, then most likely as a government mouthpiece, responsible for translation and distribution of government decrees and sometimes included in campaigns for « civilization ». The growing acknowledgement from the side of the administration is reflected by the general budget of 1912, in which, for the first time, the Commissie voor de Volkslectuur appears as a separate item of its own. The amount of money granted was rather high, at least compared to what the Commissie had received during its first years (Op. Vb 821).

The stream of information steadily flowed from colonizer to colonized. Why then not let it flow in the opposite direction as well? After a short time the Volkslectuur proved itself to be a wide-reaching system of sensors and information collectors of great efficiency. The intimate knowledge of indigenous cultures opened up the possibility of utilization of the information collected elsewhere by other departments. Repeatedly, inquiries about politically involved persons were made with the help of the Volkslectuur, e.g. about Tjokroaminoto, Darsono, Semaun, and Mangoenkoesoemo. Documents prove that colonial institutions like the Department of Justice repeatedly turned to the Volkslectuur with requests for translation and for deciphering of political letters which had come into their hands by way of spies. At least two of these deciphered letters (presumably by Tjokroaminoto to Sosrokardono) are still in existence. One of them, dating from 2 May 1923, was translated by J.H. Ziesel, deputy during the time of Rinkes' absence. He deciphered meticulously not only the sender and the addressee of the letter, but also revealed the meaning of seemingly insignificant words like « traditional society-meeting » and « dancemaids », which in this context pertained to Sarekat Islam and the trade union. In this case, Ziesel proved his knowledge not only of the strongly Javanese-influenced Malay language, but also of the entire cultural and political context (Geh. Vb 239).

A further method for obtaining information about certain indigenous circles was to send out personnel to make contact with these circles. In the crucial period of spring 1926, when the nationalist movement displayed a constantly growing radicalism, the Governor General deemed it urgent to investigate possible ways to restore or regain the confidence of the disillusioned indigenous intellectuals. His aim was to probe « unobtrusively with the help of someone well versed in native psychology (...) how the intellectuals in question feel ». Ziesel was considered to have the desired expertise in the Javanese psychology, and it seemed safe to assume that « under the cover of a journey on the Volkslectuur's behalf he would find an opportunity to come into contact with intellectual circles without drawing attention » (in Van de Wal 1965 : 674) (16).

According to the documents, Ziesel agreed to undertake such a journey for the purpose of spying, but he demanded perfect secrecy with regard to the delicate venture. Unfortunately, no report on the Ziesel journey have been detected in the archives so far. The idea of using the Volkslectuur as a baro-

meter for the political climate originated from Rinkes. But he followed a different strategy than the administration: while still in the position of Adviser, he had already directed his attention to the domestic press.

Attempts to Control the Indigenous Press

Already in 1915 Rinkes had raised the criticism that the medium of the press was not being effectively used as a means of enlightening the indigenous population (Op. Vb 2005). Only in 1917 did he finally obtain sufficient room for maneuver to put his tactics to a practical test. The Survey of the Native Press (*Inlandsche Persoverzicht*, hereafter IPO) was an useful instrument in the struggle against the domestic press. The IPO observed and evaluated the indigenous journalistic market, and its Dutch translations had become obligatory reading matter for all colonial officials. At first produced by the Adviser for Native Affairs, this review of articles was compiled by the Volkslectuur from 1917 on, or to be more precise, by the newly installed press section of the Volkslectuur. The press section functioned as one of the most delicate sensors of colonial power. The Volkslectuur itself imaged it to be a « stethoscope with which the Bureau registers the heart beats of native thought » (B.P. : 18 ; orig.).

Rinkes was not the only one to be aware of the usefulness of the IPO. A long list of colonial institutions gratefully drew information from it. Documents prove that on account of IPO summaries, repressive measures were taken against indigenous persons or press organs. For the sake of its pretended neutrality, the repressive character of the IPO had, of course, to be concealed. In 1925, about two hundred products of the domestic press were regularly seen and partly translated by the Volkslectuur. Originally meant to keep colonial officials informed, the IPO soon aroused interest within the business community, so that the IPO was made accessible in the form of a weekly edition of about fifty pages. A monthly – and secret – condensed version of only twenty pages continued to be distributed exclusively in official circles.

Ever since his time as Adviser, Rinkes' aim was not only to observe, but also to control and indirectly to influence the indigenous press and even to make it serve the colonial interests. In an official note, Rinkes sketched out his plan as follows : 1) Articles from loyal Dutch periodicals should be extracted and translated or adapted in order to be launched into indigenous journals. 2) Governmental decrees should be distributed more often through indigenous periodicals. 3) Articles found harmful were to be counteracted by loyal-minded ones introduced into the domestic press. 4) General enlightenment of the population should be enhanced by circulating instructive books and brochures free of charge (Op. Vb 2080). In contrast to the higher officials concerned, Rinkes did firmly believe in the possibility of at least partly co-opting Indonesian press organs. A very personal ambition made him want to bring the printing plant *Evolutie* led by Datoek Toemenggoeng under his control. Despite the fact that it had been financed mainly through a government loan, *Evolutie* still defended its own independence, most of all with regard to its daily newspaper *Neratja*. In the beginning categorized by the IPO as « algemeen » (which is close enough to neutral), from 1919 on *Neratja*'s political tendency was stamped as « radicaal Sarekat Islam ». More than anything else,

Rinkes wanted to get his fingers on the newspaper *Neratja*.

Rinkes took strong issue with Dt. Toemenggoeng over an article on Sarekat Islam and one of its leaders, Tjokroaminoto. Consequently, Dt. Toemenggoeng accused him of censorship. In return Rinkes raised the issue of repaying the loan. Finally Rinkes offered generously to take over the printing plant, including its staff and all its publication and attach it to the Volkslectuur in absolute secrecy. In fact he even offered to liquidate all remaining debts. Dt. Toemenggoeng refused, and as a result, Rinkes turned to the O&E in an outburst of indignation and anger. According to Kern's notes, Rinkes then announced provocatively, « dat't hem wel lukken zou de krant te krijgen » : that he was in any case going to get his hands on the paper one way or another (ms. Kern 1922). In the end, Kern informed Rinkes by letter that he neither shared his point of view, and therefore would not support his concern, nor did he appreciate Rinkes' way of handling the affair, and that he most of all disapproved of his harsh tone (letter of 20.9.1922). At this point, the officials in charge hoped to have settled the affair, but that was not the case. Rinkes soon started to launch numerous articles into Indonesian and Dutch periodicals which revealed to the public the hitherto well-kept secret of government loans to indigenous press organs; at the same time, he discredited *Neratja* as being corrupt.

After the failure of the attempt to manoeuvre independent press organs into dependency on the government and thereby to purchase their loyalty, Rinkes began to compete with them, using periodicals published by the Volkslectuur. Already in 1918, Rinkes had launched the Volkslectuur-weekly *Sri Poestaka* (in Malay, with popular scientific features) without the knowledge, let alone the permission, of the O & E. Now, five years later, Rinkes called into being a further Malay weekly: *Pandji Poestaka*. In no time at all it won a large readership and became one of the most popular journals among Indonesians: from about 3.000 copies per edition in the initial phase, its circulation climbed to 7.000. Its enormous success made *Pandji Poestaka* a promising means of counter-propaganda in the eyes of the administration and a potential counter-weight to « tendentious » periodicals such as *Api* or *Sin Po* (Op. Mr 232). Since the Volkslectuur's interference in the field of the press met with the government's approval, almost unlimited financial resources for journalistic activities were provided (despite of general cut-backs), whereas in the area of book production, the Volkslectuur was expected to be more or less self-supporting.

Documents prove that Rinkes stood under constant pressure to turn *Pandji Poestaka* into a daily newspaper and thereby to create an effective instrument of counter-propaganda. This clumsy tactic completely jeopardized Rinkes' strategy of subtle manipulation, political distraction and tranquilization. The summaries of the (even public) IPO clearly demonstrate the functioning of the Volkslectuur-journals : while in the domestic newspapers, the nationalist and communist movements were the focus of attention, *Sri Poestaka* (beginning in 1918), *Pandji Poestaka* (1923), *Kedjawèn* (1926), and *Parahyanagan* (1928/29) brought features of the quality of *The National Enquirer* or of *Readers Digest*. The Volkslectuur-articles dwelled on topics such as the most recent technical advances, natural catastrophes, marriages and obituaries, medals of honour, royalty and sensationalist items. Although a new indige-

nous elite had long been developing and preparing itself to replace the traditional one, it still seemed wise not to treat the old ally neglectfully. For that reason, an extra signal of recognition had been sent out in the form of the Javanese journal *Kedjawèn*, which was completely tuned to Javanese (courtly) cultural patterns and which was full of flattery for the feudal nobility.

Attempts at Co-optation

As early as 1914, Rinkes, in his position as Adviser, had put forward an analysis of indigenous society based on its presumed degree of readiness for voluntary association. Accordingly, he had differentiated between four main groups: a) the conservative nobility, b) the Boedi Oetomo movement, c) Sarekat Islam, and d) the Indische Partij. As mentioned above, high expectations were no longer associated with the first group, but it nevertheless could not be neglected. The Javanese lower nobility, mainly organized in the Boedi Oetomo movement, appeared open to modernization and willing to cooperate, so that the government could expect returns on its advances. On account of its heterogeneity, Sarekat Islam was categorized as at least worth an attempt, whereas it hardly seemed conceivable to Rinkes that the Indische Partij could be won as an ally (Op. Vb 1412). This early estimation by Rinkes determined form and intensity of the later offers by the Volkslectuur, which were addressed to members and organs belonging to the above-mentioned groups.

The good faith of the Indonesians in the Volkslectuur, which increased in the course of successful incorporation, strengthened the Volkslectuur (and the entire colonial apparatus) as it weakened potential resistance. The integration of prominent nationalists and opinion leaders such as Abdoel Moeis, Sutan Pamoentjak or Agus Salim, just to mention a few, led understandably to high resonance. Noteworthy here seems the fact that all three had been activists in the Sarekat Islam movement and had worked for the abhorred newspaper *Neratja* before they joined the Volkslectuur, either as employees or on a freelance basis. Surprisingly enough, those Indonesians who cooperated with the Dutch were rarely accused of collaboration. A plausible explanation may be seen in the steadily upheld image of neutrality, benevolence, and the aura of Western modernity. Besides covering material needs, a contract with the Volkslectuur was prestigious and guaranteed literary success (Aman 1947 :170ff).

Counter-propaganda

The remarks so far on the personnel and the press policy of Volkslectuur show how the aspired integration was accomplished. The example of the Javanese shadow-play (*wayang*), however, illustrates the limits of this strategy when it comes to oral literary traditions. In a secret memo written in November 1926 and titled « Provision of Information to the Public on Governmental Policies » Ziesel saw no possibility of addressing the indigenous population through puppeteers (*dalang*) or of employing shadow-plays as counter-propaganda (Op. Mr 261). This memo, however, started a lengthy debate on whether or not shadow-plays could be utilized for colonial purposes. The fact that Sarekat Islam was successfully employing popular theatre for covert political agitation put pressure on the Volkslectuur to reconsider the potential

contained in this genre. Finally, the Volkslectuur started to look for adept puppeteers who should deliver suitable counter-propagandistic plays. These could, of course, not simply be derived from the traditional repertoire. So it remained the question who then might be able to dress an anti-communist play in suitable wayang-clothing and how to find that person (*idem*).

In the meantime, the topic had even been dealt with in the Volksraad. A few months later, Pangeran Adipati Aria Mangkoenegara wrote a long letter to the Resident of Surakarta. He suggested as an object of easy manipulation the traditionally less rigidly stereotyped parts of the Javanese epics, the so-called *lakon carangan*, but encouraged the Volkslectuur at the same time to produce *lakon*-texts on its own account. As concrete advice follows :

« The Volkslectuur should produce and make available a low price book which contains the burlesques and jokes of Semar, Garèng, Petroek (and Bagong) in accordance with Mr. Ziesel's suggestions ». (Geh. Mr AA 48)⁽¹⁷⁾.

The idea behind this was that anyone who planned a theatre performance (either with puppets or human dancers) should use this 'text-book' as a source for comic interludes and supplements to be added to the play chosen.

A similar concern was formulated by the Bupati of Pandeglang, Wiriaatmadja, when he turned to the Resident of Banten in January 1929, to communicate his sincere anxiety about politically agitating *ketoprak*-theatre groups (Geh. Vb 327). Though he pointed out his esteem for the publishing activities of the Volkslectuur, he was still not at all convinced that its text products could counterbalance the threat of this form of traditional oral literature. Rather, so the Bupati went on, story-tellers should travel throughout the land and report to the common people about the merits of the rulers - as used to be the custom in former times. Back then, the stories had been devoted to the Raja's greatness, in the present days their praise would have to pertain to the colonial government. As one very suitable medium the Bupati then suggested the wayang :

« What I am aiming at is the following: While the nationalists keep poisoning the minds of the people with the help of theatre-plays and other performances in order to enflame hatred towards the government, I wish to administer an antidote in form of shadow-plays, so that people will come to love the government. » (*idem*)⁽¹⁸⁾.

In the course of the following years, a number of texts emerged among the Volkslectuur-publications which probably resulted from these considerations. Besides a manual for puppeteers, several stories originating from the Javanese epics were – condensed or otherwise altered – published. Many of them featured the witty Semar and his sons, who later had a conspicuous position in the journal *Kedjawèn* with the regular column *Rembagipun Pétrukan Garèng*. The Balai Pustaka yearbook of 1928 explains :

« Thanks to the gracious arrangements made by Z.H.P.A.A. Mangkoenegara VII, drawings have been obtained which show the clowns of the wayang in modern dress, as appropriate to the topics with which they deal. » (Resultaten 1928 : 7)⁽¹⁹⁾.

Long before other departments even thought of spreading counter-propaganda to be produced by the Volkslectuur, Rinke and Ziesel had already worked out a detailed concept to fight communistic propaganda (Geh. Vb 313).

This concept paid less attention to the kind of clumsy brochure later favoured by the administration, but rather fancied entertaining prose. In addition to the press, the Western novel became the focus of interest. Activities in the literary field were noticeably intensified when an alarming report from a circle of regents informed the Volkslectuur about a number of recent very popular entertaining novels published by a « communistisch kantoor van Volkslectuur » (sic!). On the example of three of these books, Ziesel demonstrated the Volkslectuur's tactic of subtle manipulation, which in this case called for the production of counterbalancing texts (idem). The first example dealt with a regent's daughter who rejected being married according to her social standing, but who married a carpenter instead - and finally led a life full of joy and happiness. Ziesel admitted that this adaption of an originally Western text was well done and smoothly written. As an appropriate counterpart, Ziesel imagined the story of a regent's daughter who takes all efforts to explain to a workman, who has fallen in love with her, that there is no happiness to be found outside one's own social class. The second example was about the troublesome everyday life of labourers and small leaseholders. The proposed Volkslectuur-text, however, is meant to picture the life of workmen who in the end achieve prosperity through diligence and thrift. The third chosen example was actually the biography of Semaun, the prominent leading figure of the union and Communist movement. (Comparable texts about Dipanegara and Hadji Misbach had already been announced.) In this case, Ziesel recommended a fictitious « counter-biography » of a man of low social origin who knew how to climb high on the ladder of social status.

Civilizer, Modernizer, Tranquilizer

The whole of the Volkslectuur's publishing activities – in the form of fiction, non-fiction or images ⁽²⁰⁾ – supplies evidence for the assumption that the Volkslectuur helped to design, promote and impose patterns of social interactions as they were necessitated by the predominant capitalistic structures. This aspect is vividly illustrated by the numerous « civilization » and « modernization » campaigns initiated from the governmental side. These covered the range from health care, nutrition, and hygiene to traffic rules, and even to rice-cultivation as an object of modernization.

The Volkslectuur supported all of the campaigns by composing and distributing manuals and articles as requested. Just as strong as these campaigns was the influence of advertisements. Quite a number of campaigns were intertwined with commerce. Thus, hygiene materialized as Lux soap, health care took shape in aspirin-tablets, and baby-care became Johnson's baby oil or Nestle's instant milkpowder. Contradicting Drewes' statement in an interview that the Volkslectuur exclusively advertised products which a) could be afforded by the Indonesians and b) were of some benefit for them, large-sized advertisements for Chevrolets or beer and wine were inserted in all Volkslectuur periodicals. Ever since 1917, commercial advertisement regularly appeared in Volkslectuur-publications, namely the journals. Considering that the Volkslectuur as a government service did not depend on the income resulting from product advertisement, economic considerations cannot serve as

a satisfactory explanation. It must be left to speculation to what extent personal interests or contacts encouraged taking on commercial advertisement. But it should be taken into account that advertising at that time was generally understood as a symbol of progress and modernity. In several articles, or better : hymns of praise, the Volkslectuur advertised advertising (*Pandji Poestaka* 17.8.1926).

Remarkably enough, the Volkslectuur did not stick to conventional means at all, but introduced the very modern means of advertising products indirectly, i.e. bringing the advertisement to the reader's attention in the guise of informative articles ⁽²¹⁾. Prose texts were no exception either, subtle product placement actually occurred in quite a number of Volkslectuur novels. The emphatic mentioning of aspirin in the novel *Salah Asuhan* by Abdoel Moeis reminds today's reader of an early TV-commercial: A young man in his room, having endured a series of bad blows, is brooding on his misfortune. While tormented by a dreadful headache he tries to think of ways to tackle the problems. At that very moment there comes a knock on the door; it is a friend (an elderly Dutch man). He enters the room, in his hand a small bottle of medicine (the wrapping industry did not yet use throw-away packages). He fills a glass with water and together with the medicine he hands it to the young man, saying : « Minumlah aspirin, Han! » (Moeis 1987 : 190). Besides product placement, venereal diseases, rabies, hygienic precautions or the abuse of drugs are constituents of almost every Volkslectuur novel. Interwoven with the plot are often scenes of clear reference to western as well as traditional forms of medical care, whereby the latter is ridiculed or imputed to be charlatantry and the first idealized. Drewes approvingly remembered Sutan Iskandar as the author who interlarded his texts most consistently with such « civilizing » elements, and even in « non-fiction » texts, such as the memoirs of Jan Ligthard, he virtuously integrated long passages on cleanliness, neatness or the benefits of getting fresh air regularly.

Advertisement clearly goes beyond the simple promotion of a certain product. In fact, whole sets of social roles and value patterns are conveyed by advertisement. The role of women in the Volkslectuur's design is a striking example. The Volkslectuur introduces the self-confident, modern woman : she plays tennis and goes in for riding, she is as sovereign as charming, a perfect hostess, and, of course, she uses the same brand of soap as the filmstar X. This new outline of her social role all of a sudden put the Indonesian woman in the position of being an opinion leader – at least concerning commerce. Regarded as potential customer, the Indonesian woman now was courted for her own sake. Less welcome than the above described « sportive » modern woman was the « educated » modern woman in the Indonesian (male) society. The emblem of the Volkslectuur, which was displayed on every catalog, annual, journal, and on the sales vans, featured a young, traditionally dressed woman standing in front of a book shelf with a book in her hand (see illus. A). This illustration surely motivated Indonesian women first of all to begin to dare to imagine themselves with a book in their hands. Sometimes, however, it turned out to be extremely difficult to take the second step : to read the books they were already holding, although the educational system had been noticeably improving women's situation. Any woman who did succeed in taking



Pembatja!

Periksalah gambar gadis ini. Agaknja ia tengah bersoesah hati, memikirkan nasib dirinja dan segenap kaoem isteri. Boléh djadi banjak poela hal jang mengganggoe keamanan hatinja. Tetapi biarlah sadja dahoeleoe, ta'oesah kami bitjarakan sekarang. Barangkali dibelakang hari ada masanja jang baik akan membitjarakan hal itoe.

Kami loekiskan gambarnja disini. Sedikit hari lagi diseleroeh Hindia pembatja akan bersoea dengan gambar anak gadis jang tjantik itoe. membawa warta dari Balai Poestaka. Bersoea dengan gambarnja, kata kami, sebab *orangnja* ta' akan toean dapati, ia hanja ada pada kami. Harap djangan menjesal!



A. *Pandji Poestaka*, 42/II, 16.10.1924 : 850.

the second step after all, was soon put back in her place : she was expected to use the acquired knowledge to help her husband, and to raise her children according to Western models. Possibly misled women were kindly offered help by the *Volkslectuur* journals, in which columns entitled *Doenia isteri* (Wives' world) filled pages on pages with cooking recipes, tips for make-up, various dressmaking patterns, and a lot of good advice about the raising of children. Autonomous political views, let alone decisions, were not asked of the Indonesian woman. On the contrary, the *Volkslectuur*'s fearful anticipation related to (politically) emancipated women is visualized in a caricature published in *Pandji Poestaka* (see illus. B).

Just as certain social roles were defined, whole cognitive concepts were transferred. The Western understanding of time was gradually superimposed on the traditional perception of it. Manifested in watches and alarm clocks, the idea of punctuality slowly led to fixed working and opening hours, demanded rigid discipline and suggested strictly scheduled days and future planning (see illus. C and D). Hand in hand with the perception of time went the

SOERGA DIDALAM ROEMAH?

(SOAL ISTERI DENGAN POLITIK...)

.....bahwa dari sekarang ta' ada salahnja isteri Indonesia toeroet masoek kedalam kalangan politik

..... bahwa kaoem isteri dalam oeroesan politik ta' oesah ikoet-ikoetan (mengekor) soeaminja sadja, oempamanja sebab soeaminja masoek Boedi Oetomo, laoe ia masoek ke Boedi Oetomo djoega, meski ta' sesoeai dengan kejakinannja. Djangan begitoe, biarpoen soeaminja misalnja masoek P. I., isterinja ta' mengapa masoek ke P. N. I., kalau kejakinan hatinja sesoeai dengan P. N. I. itoe.....

(Petikan pidato dikongres P. P. I. I. di Solo betoem selang berapa lama ini).



'Akibat pidato itoe begini, kata toekang gambar kami.....



TAM - TAM

**Apakah témpoh-témpoh toean baroe
pergi tidoer setelah djaoeh malam?**

Dan keésokan harinja toean mesti bangoen pagi-pagi bagaimana biasa? Belilah béke Tam-Tam! Tentoe tidak kapiran. Boléh djadi kadang-kadang pagi-pagi hari toea marah dan bentji sekali akan dia, karena ia tidak berhenti-henti berboenji, tetapi kala hati toean soedah sabar kembali, tentoe Tam-Tam toean pandang sebagai sahaba

Lihatlah dibawah ini TAM-TAM SESAUDARA

Jang ketjil, jang sedang dan jang besar.

Bisa dibeli ditoko-toko jang bail



dissemination of the Western understanding of money. Once the acceptance of this means of payment had been achieved among the indigenous population, further closely linked ideas were adopted, e.g. a positive attitude toward consumption or saving. The « rational » handling of money had not yet been thoroughly learnt by the Indonesians (at least according to Western view), when non-cash means of payment were already propagated.

Again the Volkslectuur played an important part in this process : manuals, booklets and articles as well as prose texts acquainted the indigenous reader with the new way of valuing objects. To help the Indonesians to overcome their suspicion, situational illustrations were employed, formsheets and sample cheques were printed and their use explained. Savings accounts and subscriptions were enthusiastically recommended. The Volkslectuur's customers were constantly trained to apply these new modes of payment : ordering by catalog, paying by cheque, and holding subscriptions, which again entailed punctuality and discipline. Defaulters were reminded in public (usually in special columns of the Volkslectuur journals), exemplary subscribers were praised or granted a bonus. Reaching beyond this pragmatic side, Volkslectuur's publications spread the belief that whoever had the firm will to do so could achieve wealth and prosperity just by disciplined working, industriousness and saving.

Conclusion

This depiction of the creation, development, and activities of the Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka has shed new light on the tense and fragile network of interrelated forces in colonial society. The conflict between individuals and institutions is brought into sharp focus by this picture of the on-going interplay between political objectives (as constrained by stipulations set by outside forces) and historical accidents, coincidence, or subjective factors. The Volkslectuur would have never become the sociopolitical instrument that it did without someone of Rinkes' personality : a « marginal » person, not entirely bound by the perceptions predominant in his culture and time, but a character strong and stubborn enough to stand up for his personal convictions and expectations. Rinkes provides a perfect example of the role of subjective factors in shaping history. However, without the right historical constellation this subjective factor could never have exercised its role. The historical case of the Volkslectuur demonstrates that the generally postulated polarity between « cultural » and « political » requires reconsideration: culture is public policy and of political relevance.

FOOTNOTES

1. This paper is based on my dissertation « Die Institution Literatur und der Prozess ihrer Kolonisation. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Arbeitsweise des Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur-Balai Pustaka in Niederländisch-Indien zu Beginn dieses Jahrhunderts ». (The Institution Literature and the Process of its Colonialization. History and Function of the Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur/Balai Pustaka in the Dutch East Indies at the Beginning of this Century). Phil. Diss. Hamburg 1990/91. Bremen Asia/Pacific Studies. (Ed. by Wilfried Wagner, Univ. of

- Bremen), Münster/Hamburg (planned for spring 1992).
2. « Het werd van lieverlede een dringende eisch in de organisatie zoodanige verandering te brengen dat de belangen der Volkslectuur intensiever en meer systematisch ter hand konden worden genomen, daarvoor een goed georganiseerd en geoutilleerd bureau in te richten en het bureau voor de Volkslectuur af te scheiden van dat van den Adviseur voor Inlandsche zaken ». This and following other translations by the author unless marked « orig. ».
 3. In September 1917 the Governmental Secretary proposed that the Bureau of the Adviser for Native Affairs be divided into a Bureau for Native and Islamic Affairs (under the direction of Hazeu) and a Bureau for Press Relations and Volkslectuur (under the direction of Rinkes). But the Council of the Netherlands-Indies feared that the items « Islam » and « press » would lead to trouble. As an alternative the names « Gouvernmental Commissioner for Native and Arab Affairs » and « Head of the Volkslectuur and Related Affairs » were suggested (Op. Vb 1771).
 4. For Rinkes' peculiar biographical background see also Drewes (1961).
 5. « Lagi poela tiadalah oesah lagi mereka itoe dalam waktoenja jang terloeang akan serta dalam hal-hal jang terdjadi diloeang atau serta menggerakkan hal jang gandjil-gandjil ».
 6. « die ook een particulier handelaar zou nemen, als adverteeren in de (inlandsche) dagbladen, toezending van een recensie-exemplaar van alle nieuwe uitgaven; ten gerieve der redacteuren werde dan meestal meteen maar een (natuurlijk gunstige) recensie bijgevoegd. Voorts ging hiermee gepaard een rondzenden van prospectus, (...) het exposeeren op pasar-malam, jaarbeurs en dergelijke en het uitgeven van een beschrijvende catalogus, die elk jaar gratis beschikbaar wordt gesteld » (Rinkes 1923 : 187).
 7. « 13. Kirimilah kami dengan segera chabar-chabar tentang kedjadian jang penting dalam pergaulan Boemipoetra ».
 8. I wish to thank Prof. G.W.J. Drewes for his kind support, particularly for the interviews (held on 18th June, 1st and 30th Oct. 1988, 22nd Febr. 1989), which offered me precious information from a contemporary witness.
 9. « In de huidige tijden van verhoogde onrust en drang naar weten en kunnen is de belangrijkheid van de taak van Volkslectuur er zeker niet minder op geworden en is haar rol in het regeerbepel stellig beduidend verzwaaard » (Op. Mr 276) .
« Communisme en de communistische propaganda krachtadig behoort te worden bestreden en dat als een indirect middel daartoe de Volkslectuur mede heeft te dienen » (Op. Mr 299, stress orig. DJ).
 10. « met Volkslectuur een instituut in het leven is geroepen, warmee een machtige invloed kan worden uitgeoefend op het geestelijk denken van het Inheemsche bevolkingsgroepen, waarvan er jaarlijks duizenden meer leeren lezen ».
 11. « goede lectuur van welke tevens een politiek-gunstige invloed wordt verwacht » (Op. Mr 299).
 12. « Het ware m.i. ongewenscht in een voor het publiek bestemde brochure met overgrooten nadruk te betoogen, dat dit land, zij het ook met de meest oprechte bedoelingen, door Volkslectuur als een beschavings-object wordt beschouwd, maar men mag vertrouwen, dat de intelligente en galante Franschman zoowel als de nuchtere en praktische Engelschman deze onuitgesproken bedoeling onmiddellijk zal weten te verstaan ».
 13. « geestelijke en sociale structuur van de Inheemsche maatschappij en van de daarin levende tendenties » ; « en did vraagt niet alleen een juist verstaan van de oude, thans in verschillende lagen verzwakkende Inheemsche cultuur, doch ook van de moderne stroomingen, denkwijzen en opvattingen, die van velerlei zijden hierop invloed oefenen ».
 14. To my knowledge it is unknown whether documents concerning Volkslectuur are to be found in Japanese archives.
 15. I thank Prof. Teeuw for allowing me access to the above mentioned report by Pamoentjak.
 16. « zeer bedekte wijze door en goed kenner van de psyche van den Inlander » ; « de werkelijke stemmingen onder de hierbedoelte intellectueelen » ; « onder het mom van een reis ter orienteering naar de behoeften inzake Volkslectuur zich op ongezochte wijze met de kringen der intellectueelen in verbinding kann stellen ».
 17. « Door de Volkslectuur ware tegen zeer lagen prijs verkrijgbaar te stellen een boekwerk, waarin kluchten en grappen van Semar, Garèng, Pétroek (en Bagong) zijn opgenomen in den geest als door den Heer Ziessel wenschelijk wordt geacht ».
 18. « Hamba poenja maksoed begini: Sedang kaoem nationalist sekarang memasokken G I F

T pada orang orang, dengan djalan tooneel-kotoprak- dan laen laen opvoering, soepaja mem-
bentji pamarentah, hamba beringin memasokken *T E G E N G I F T* dengan permainan
wajang, soepaja orang orang mentjintai pamerentah sekarang » (Geh.Vb 327, stress orig DJ).

- 19. « Door de welwillen verleende tusschenkomst van Z.H.P.A.A. Mangkoenegara VII werden van deze clowns uit de wajang teekeningen verkregen waarop ze, in overeenstemming met de door hen behandelnde onderwerpen, in moderne kleeding zijn abgebeeld ».
- 20. I wish to point out that the use of the terms « fictitious » and « non-fictitious » in fact requires further discussion which is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 21. As an example we may take an article promoting Aspirin (*Kedjawèn* 74/VII,1932), or another one promoting Nestle-milkpowder (*Pandji Poestaka* 9.7.1925).

POSTSPAARBANK

ပိုက်ဆံဆုတ်ယူရန်အတွက်

ပထမအကြိမ်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 f 100.— မိမိတို့အဖို့ ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ပိုမိုသိရှိရန်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ငွေပေးပို့ရန် 2 နှစ်၊ ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ငွေပေးပို့ရန် 3 နှစ်၊ ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 မိမိတို့အဖို့ ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ပိုမိုသိရှိရန် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ငွေပေးပို့ရန် မိမိတို့အဖို့



ပိုမိုသိရှိရန်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ပိုမိုသိရှိရန်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ပိုမိုသိရှိရန်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်
 ပိုမိုသိရှိရန်အတွက် ငွေပေးပို့ရန်

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